



The officers and airmen pilots of No. 56 (Fighter) Squadron. Names left to right : Sergt. Wilcox, Sergt. Cooney, Sergt. Thomas, F/O. Pomeroy, P.O. Kain, F.O. Simpson, P.O. Bell, Sqn. Ldr. Lea-Cox, P.O. Garlick, F/O. Foord-Kelsey, P.O. Horne, P.O. Plinston, P/O. Thomson, Sergt. Davis, Sergt. Webb, Sergt. Evetts. (Flight photograph.)

fighters which attacked him, but he finally shook them off and reached Heule aerodrome. There he began to enjoy himself. He flew along a line of sheds and dropped one bomb into one of them. "This," he said, "caused immense excitement, and I could see people running about all round the sheds." The second and third bombs also hit sheds. The fourth one did not drop, and as a machine gun was firing at him he went to Courtrai station and pulled the release again. This time the bomb dropped, and exploded between a goods train and a big shed. He then went back to Heule and silenced the machine gunners with his own guns. As he proceeded to shoot up more sheds, his wheels once touched the ground. Then he went on to Cuerne aerodrome and saw a machine being wheeled out of a shed. He fired at it, and it was hurriedly taken in again. Leaving the aerodrome, he saw two horsemen who looked like officers. He dived on them and their horses bolted. Next he attacked a goods train, and then a party of 200 infantry, who scattered. At that moment he saw an enemy aircraft, a two-seater, overhead, so he left his infantry and shot it down. It crashed, and only one man got out. A small crowd began to collect round the crash, so Maybery dived on them, and they either ran away or lay flat. Then he had a great disappointment. He was just about to attack a passenger train when his Lewis gun ran out of ammunition and his Vickers jammed. Just too bad! So he went home to breakfast.

This very gallant officer was killed four months later on December 19, 1917.

### McCudden

On August 15, Capt. J. T. B. McCudden joined the squadron and succeeded Capt. Crowe in command of "B" Flight. McCudden was the son of a quartermaster-sergeant of the Royal Engineers and was born at Gillingham, Kent, on March 28, 1895. He joined the R.F.C. as a mechanic of No. 3 Squadron in May, 1913, and went to France with that squadron. He was afterwards a mechanic in No. 20 Squadron. In June, 1915, he learnt to fly, and a year later he became a sergeant pilot in No. 29 Squadron. After proving his great skill and bravery as a fighter pilot, he was given a commission, and presently rose to be a captain and a flight commander.

Whereas Ball was essentially a lone-hand fighter, McCudden, like Mannock, was equally good in single combat and in leading a formation into a dog-fight. When

awarded the Victoria Cross on April 2, 1918, the citation in the *London Gazette* contained the following passage: "As a patrol leader he has at all times shown the utmost gallantry and skill, not only in the manner in which he has attacked and destroyed the enemy, but in the way he has, during several aerial fights, protected the newer members of his flight, thus keeping down their casualties to a minimum." Cecil Lewis writes that McCudden and Georges Guynemer got most of their victories by careful stalking, manœuvring for position, taking great pains to remain unseen, never hurrying, and keeping a wary eye against attack on themselves; they would gradually draw near, always in the blind spot, and then one long deadly burst would do the trick. He adds that both of them were superb if they got into a dog-fight.

It was fortunate for McCudden that, at the time when he joined No. 56 Squadron, the Germans were boldly flying over to the British side of the lines. Thus he shot down a number of them on the British side, where confirmation was a certainty. His total bag was 54 enemy aircraft, of which only twelve were returned as driven down out of control. Twice he bagged four German machines in one day. Later, he was killed in a crash.

One of the greatest and most gallant air fights of the whole war (second only perhaps to the fight against sixty in which Major Barker won his Victoria Cross) was that in which the German pilot, Werner Voss was killed. In his grey and brown Fokker triplane this gallant foe fought a single-handed battle for ten minutes against seven British fighters and put bullets into most of their machines. The men he fought were not raw pilots, but "B" Flight of No. 56 Squadron, led by McCudden and including such Aces (to use the French expression) as Rhys-Davids, Maybery and Hoidge. Presently other Germans came to his help but were driven off. Rhys-Davids fired about two drums at Voss and afterwards remarked to Maurice Baring: "The Hun either had armoured plates, or else he was very lucky." The two charged each other and almost collided. Voss flew nose on against McCudden, but Hoidge attacked him and drove him off. At last Rhys-Davids got in the fatal shot, and McCudden watched the triplane dive into the ground on the British side of the lines, where it broke up into a thousand fragments.

In such a fight even British sympathies must go out to the heroic German, and McCudden wrote: "His flying was wonderful, his courage magnificent, and, in my